

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 AGRE-00 STR-04
AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EUR-12 SIL-01
LAB-04 IO-13 OMB-01 /102 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PORT LOUIS 0073

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT PGOV MP MA SF TZ
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JANUARY 28

REF: PORT LOUIS 0053

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 071 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.
END SUMMARY.

1 THE CONGESTED SITUATION IN THE PORT OF PORT LOUIS CAUSED BY SLOW UNLOADING OF VESSELS HAS NOT IMPROVED IN THE PAST MONTH. SHIPPERS HAVE ANNOUNCED FREIGHT RATE INCREASES RANGING FROM 10 PERCENT TO 35 PERCENT AS A CONSEQUENCE. AT LEAST TWELVE SHIPS HAVE OFF-LOADED THEIR CARGOES DESTINED FOR MAURITIUS AT REUNION TO AVOID THE LONG DELAYS HERE. THERE ARE NOW ELEVEN SHIPS WAITING OUTSIDE THE HARBOR, AND THE SITUATION IS NOT EXPECTED TO IMPROVE BEFORE MID-FEBRUARY. THE CAUSE IS ABSENTEEISM AND LACK OF DISCIPLINE AMONG THE STEVEDORES WHO, AFTER TAKING A LONG HOLIDAY OVER THE NEW YEAR AND ENJOYING THEIR END-OF-YEAR BONUSES, HAVE BEEN REPORTING FOR WORK INFREQUENTLY, AND THEN MAINLY ON DAYS WHERE THERE IS PREMIUM PAY, WHILE REFUSING TO WORK REGULAR OVERTIME. THE COST OF IMPORTS WILL OBVIOUSLY RISE AS A RESULT OF THIS SITUATION.

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2. PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO BLAME THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM), WHICH CONTROLS THE DOCKERS UNION AND WHICH HAS PROMISED A "MOBILIZATION" CAMPAIGN AMONG ITS WORKER-SUPPORTERS, BUT THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT THE SLOW-DOWN IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. ABSENTEEISM AND INDISCIPLINE HAVE ALSO PLAGUED THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT INDUSTRY, WITH THE RESULT

THAT ABOUT 40 PERCENT OF THE BUSES ARE IDLE FOR LACK OF DRIVERS. COMMUTERS WHO WAIT HOURS FOR A BUS ARE NATURALLY INFURIATED, AND THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS UNABLE TO HELP THE SITUATION.

3. THE PUBLIC WAS ALSO OUTRAGED THIS WEEK BY A LOCK-OUT BY OWNERS OF THE ISLAND'S 85 BAKERIES WHO ARE TRYING TO PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT INTO RAISING THE PRICE OF BREAD BY 54 PERCENT TO COVER WHAT THE BAKERS CLAIM ARE INCREASED COSTS. THE PRO- GOVERNMENT PRESS HAS TRIED TO BLAME THE LACK OF BREAD ON THE MMM BECAUSE THE HEAD OF THE BAKERY OWNERS UNION IS DRONASINGH SEEKUN, DEFEATED MMM CANDIDATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISTRICT. THIS CAUSED THE MMM LEADERSHIP TO CALL A PRESS CONFERENCE AT WHICH THEY DENOUNCED THE LOCK-OUT AND CAME OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF CONSUMER INTERESTS.

4. THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC REACTION BY THE GOVERNMENT HERE TO MMM LEADER PAUL BERENGER'S ATTACKS ON IT AS A "REACTIONARY ALLIANCE OF THE RIGHT" WHICH DEPENDS ECONOMICALLY ON SOUTH AFRICA DURING HIS VISITS TO MADAGASCAR AND TANZANIA, BUT THE GOM IS CERTAINLY NOT HAPPY WITH BERENGER'S PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, NOR COULD IT BE WITH THOSE GOVERNMENTS PROVIDING HIM A PLATFORM. (SEE TANANARIVE 142 AND DAR ES SALAAM 281 FOR REPORTS ON BERENGER'S VISITS THERE.) FOLLOWING THE TANZANIA STOP BERENGER HAS DORPPED OUT OF SIGHT, OR AT LEAST OUT OF THE PAPERS, WHICH WILL LEND CREDENCE TO CHARGES IN THE PRO-LABOR PARTY MAURITIAN PRESS THAT HE INTENDS TO VISIT MOSCOW SECRETLY TO CONFER WITH HIS SOVIET "MASTERS." THE GOM APPARENTLY TRIED TO HINDER COVERAGE OF BERENGER'S MADAGASCAR

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VISIT BY CUTTING OUT OF ITS AFP BULLETIN AN ACCOUNT OF IT, BUT THE MMM PAPER OBTAINED IT FROM ANOTHER SOURCE AND GAVE IT FULL PLAY.

5. THE MADAGASCAR GOVERNMENT CANCELLED USE OF AN AIR MADAGASCAR PLANE LEASED BY AIR MAURITIUS FOR REGULAR SERVICE TO AND FROM SOUTH AFRICA SHORTLY AFTER BERENGER'S VISIT TO THAT COUNTRY, THOUGH IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THERE WAS A CONNECTION. THE ACTION MAY HAVE BEEN A PRECAUTION BY THE GDRM WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, WILL NOT RETURN A SOUGH AFRICAN CESSNA IT SEIZED AFTER IT LANDED ILLEGALLY IN MADAGASCAR. THE EFFECT HERE HAS BEEN TO STRAND A LOT OF TOURISTS, MAINLY SOUTH AFRICANS, AND TO DIRSUPT TRAVEL PLANS OF MANY PEOPLE. AIR MAURITIUS IS REPORTED TO BE SHOPPING AROUND FOR A REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT WITH WHICH TO RESTORE THIS SERVICE. MEANWHILE, THE MMM ORGAN, LE MILITANT, HAS CHARGED THAT THE DETAINED CESSNA, WHICH WAS ON THE WAY FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO MAURITIUS, WAS CARRYING ARMS FOR THE MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) TO BE USED TO ASSASSINATE MMM LEADERS AND INSTALL

ITSELF IN POWER, THROUGH AN ARMED COUP FINANCED BY SOUTH AFRICA AND ASSISTED BY THE MAFIA AND THE U.S. TEAMSTERS UNION. (SEE PORT LOUIS 072).

6. A DISAPPOINTING CROWD OF ABOUT 2000 ATTENDED A LABOR PARTY NATIONAL MEETING IN ROSE HILL ON JANUARY 23 WHICH HAD BEEN HEAVILY ADVERTISED. THE SPEAKERS, WHO INCLUDED THE PRIME MINISTER, LABELLED THE MMM AS "THE PARTY OF VIOLENCE", DEFENDED THE COALITION WITH THE PMSD AS A NECESSITY, ADMITTED LABOR HAD MADE SOME MISTAKES IN THE LAST ELECTION AND PROMISED A REORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY WITH MORE EMPHASIS ON YOUTH. RAM DEFENDED THE PARTY AGAINST THE CRITICISMS OF BHUGALOO (REFTEL) BY SAYING THAT THE COALITION WITH THE PMSD HAD BEEN APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE LABOR MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY, AND THE CHOICE OF LABOR CANDIDATES HAD BEEN MADE DEMOCRATICALLY BY SELECTION COMMITTEES CHOSEN FOR THAT PURPOSE. RAM SAID THE MMM HAD PROPOSED A COALITION WITH LABOR IN WHICH THEY, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MMM, WOULD CONTROL INTERIOR, THE POLICE AND THE ARMY, "SO THAT THEY COULD RULE THE PEOPLE WITH BAYONETS." EVEN THE PRO-LABOR PRESS ADMITTED THAT THE TURNOUT AT THE MEETING HAD BEEN DISTRESSINGLY SMALL, BUT EXPLAINED THAT THE LABOR PARTY APPEALS PRIMARILY TO THE "SILENT MAJORITY" WHO DON'T ATTEND POLITICAL RALLIES.

7. KHER JAGATSINGH WAS SWORN IN AS EDUCATION MINISTER ON JANUARY 20. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE HE SAID THE LABOR PARTY HAD NEGOTIATED WITH BOTH THE PMSD AND THE MMM ABOUT FORMING A COALITION, AND THE FORMER PARTY HAD SHOWN ITSELF TO BE MORE "FLEXIBLE." MMM PRESIDENT JUGNAUTH LATER CONFIRMED THAT AFTER THE ELECTIONS THERE HAD BEEN CONTACTS BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND LABOR ABOUT FORMING A GOVERNMENT, BUT THESE HAD NOT REACHED A "SERIOUS" STAGE. HE SAID THE MMM HAD INSISTED THAT A COALITION IMPLEMENT A "TRULY SOCIALIST PROGRAM."

8. THE ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE LABOR PARTY HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 22-23. THE PARTY IS UNDERTAKING A PROGRAM OF REORGANIZATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN PREPARATION FOR THE CONGRESS.

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LAB-04 IO-13 OMB-01 /102 W
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9. AT A PARTY MEETING IN BEAU BASSIN ON JANUARY 21, PMSD
LEADER GAETAN DUVAL STATED THAT IN THE WEEK AFTER THE ELECTIONS
TWO RUSSIAN SHIPS STOOD OFF MAURITIUS, WITH 147 "EXPERTS"
ON BOARD WHO SPOKE CREOLE AND FRENCH, READY TO REPLACE
MAURITIAN CIVIL SERVANTS WHO MIGHT REFUSE TO WORK FOR A
COMMUNIST (MMM) GOVERNMENT. THE MMM NEWSPAPER, LE MILITANT,
HAS RIDICULED THIS STORY. DUVAL SAID THE DECEMBER 20 ELECTIONS
HAD NOT BEEN A CONTEST BETWEEN THE WORKERS AND THE CAPITALISTS
BUT A FIGHT BETWEEN ETHNIC GROUPS, WITH ONE GROUP (THE MUSLIMS)
HOPING TO COME TO POWER VIA A VICTORY OF THE MMM.

10. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT 44 FORMER MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY
ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE RETIREMENT PENSIONS ESTABLISHED BY THE
LABOR GOVERNMENT JUST PRIOR TO THE LAST ELECTIONS. THOSE
WHO SERVED AT LEAST TWO TERMS ARE ELIGIBLE. THE MMM OPPOSITION
HAS CRITICIZED THIS MEASURE AS A SIMPLE PAYOFF TO DEFEATED
POLITICIANS AND THOSE THAT LABOR WANTED TO "EASE OUT" TO
MAKE WAY FOR YOUNGER CANDIDATES.

11. EX-MMM PERSONALITY RAM PYNDIAH IN A NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW
SAID HIS TROUBLES WITH THE PARTY AROSE FROM THE "RIGHT WING"
OF THE PARTY. ASKED TO IDENTIFY THE "RIGHT WING", PYNDIAH
SAID IT IS THE PRESENT POLITIBURO. THE SOLUTION, HE ADDED,
IS TO PUT MORE TRADE UNION PEOPLE ON THE POLITIBURO SO THAT
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THE PARTY WILL LOOK AFTER THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS, AS
IT IS SUPPOSED TO DO.

12. IN A PRESS INTERVIEW INDEPENDENT FORWARD BLOC (IFB)
LEADER BISSOONDOYAL ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT FROM ELECTIVE
POLITICS THOUGH HE SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE TO FIGHT AGAINST
CORRUPTION AND THE FOREIGN FINANCING OF MAURITIAN POLITICS.
HE SAID THE IFB WOULD NOT REPRESENT CANDIDATES IF ELECTIONS ARE
HELD SOON BECAUSE THE PARTY IS BROKE.

13. FRANCE VALLET, LEADER OF THE CENTER REPUBLICAN PARTY, IS IN LONDON TO PLEAD HIS APPEAL TO THE PRIVY COUNCIL AGAINST THE ABOLITION OF BY-ELECTIONS. NO OTHER PARTY JOINED IN HIS SUIT.

14. A PLAY IN CREOLE CALLED "LI", WRITTEN BY MMMSP LEADER DEV VIRAHSAWMY WHILE HE WAS IMPRISONED IN 1972, WILL BE PRESENTED IN MARCH AT A CULTURAL FESTIVAL SPONSORED BY THE MMMSP TO CELEBRATE ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY. THE PROGRAM WILL INCLUDE "REVOLUTIONARY SEGAS" (THE CREOLE DANCE FORM). THE HERO OF "LI" IS A REVOLUTIONARY PERSONAGE WHO NEVER APPEARS BUT WHO "DOMINATES THE PLAY." A MORE APPROPRIATE TITLE MIGHT BE "WAITING FOR BERENGER." TWTWTW.
KEELEY

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